

FARMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE



Policy Number:
354-02 **Effective Date:**
5/09/2016

Subject:
Amber Alert

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "ST. D. HEBBE".

Steven D. Hebbe, Chief of Police



PURPOSE:

To establish protocol for employing the assistance of local radio and television stations to interrupt normal programming and request public assistance in locating children who have just been abducted.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Farmington Police Department to develop an Amber Alert program by establishing a cooperative effort between law enforcement and media outlets to assist in locating children who have just been abducted.

PROCEDURE:

For purposes of an Amber Alert, child abduction is defined as an incident in which a child is reported to be involuntarily missing from the person having care-taking responsibilities for the child. Absent an eyewitness to the abduction, there should exist a reliable evidence that the child's disappearance was not voluntary. The Amber Alert should not be used for cases involving runaways, missing children in which there is no evidence of foul play, or custody disputes that are not reasonably believed to endanger the life or physical health of a child.

The Amber Alert program is designed to solicit assistance from the public in the identification and location of abducted children when there is a credible threat to their safety. The Department will provide media outlets with critical information concerning confirmed child abductions which might assist in locating the victim. Through a cooperative effort between law enforcement and the media, information concerning the abducted child and any suspect information will be broadcast throughout the state of New Mexico.

Participation in this program by New Mexico broadcasters is entirely voluntary and the discretion of each broadcast station.

Activation of the Amber Alert must meet all of the following criteria:

1. The abducted child must be 17 years of age or younger, or of a proven mental or physical disability;
2. There must be evidence of an actual abduction of a child and not a runaway;

3. There must be a credible reason to believe the child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death; and
4. There must be enough descriptive information about the child, the suspect, and/or the suspect's vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast will assist in the location of the child or suspect.

When a report of a possible child abduction is made, the officer investigating the incident gathers as much information as possible from the person making the report in order to determine if the incident meets criteria for activating the Amber Alert. If all criteria are met, the Department's on Call Public Information Officer (PIO) is notified, and the PIO is then responsible for initiating an Amber Alert via the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Participating media outlets then break into programming to relay the information to the public as soon as possible in an effort to find the child before harm occurs.

The EAS is a federal communications system designed to inform the public in the event of a civil emergency. EAS messages, when accepted by participating radio and television stations, pre-empt local programming and are preceded and concluded with distinctive alert tones. In the event of an Amber Alert, the PIO contacts 770 KKOB (AM) Radio, the State primary station for the New Mexico EAS, at one of the following unpublished telephone numbers: (505) 767-6770 or (505) 767-9189. Additional contact information for KKOB Radio is as follows:

KKOB Radio- Director of Engineering

500 4th Street NW, 5th Floor

Albuquerque, NM 87102

Office # (505) 767-6763

Cell # (505) 238-8810

Upon receipt of an activation request, KKOB asks the calling law enforcement official for their name and pre-established four digit code number. Only if the name and code number match those on file with KKOB will the request be accepted. The Farmington Police Department officials authorized to activate an Amber Alert include the Chief of Police, the Deputy Chief, PIO, and Lieutenants. KKOB broadcasts the EAS Alert as a CEM event-a Civil Emergency Message-for the entire state of New Mexico.

Additionally, in the event of a child abduction the PIO directs the San Juan County Communications Center to send an all points bulletin teletype to all New Mexico law enforcement agencies advising them of the Amber Alert. The teletype will contain all pertinent information necessary for other agencies to properly advise their personnel.

It is possible the broadcast of an Amber Alert will immediately generate a high volume of calls from the public. Prior to activating the Amber Alert, the PIO is responsible for notifying the Communications Center that an Amber Alert will be activated. The Communications Center then establishes a phone number for citizens to call with information, and incoming calls are initially handled by the Communications Center. The Communication Center monitors the call load and determines whether there is a need to establish a separate call center to answer

the incoming Amber Alert calls. If a decision is made to establish a call center, the PIO is responsible for establishing the location of the call center and ensuring that the call center is adequately staffed to handle a high volume of calls simultaneously. Once a call center has been adequately staffed, the phone lines are transferred to that location, and the call center begins answering all calls to the designated Amber Alert phone line.

The PIO is responsible for preparing the information to be contained in the Amber Alert, including the name, age, sex, physical description and clothing of the victim and suspect, vehicle description, possible direction of travel, and location and time last seen. The agency's name and telephone number for the public to call will also be included in the Amber Alert, which should be no more than 30 seconds in duration. The [Amber Alert Press Release Form](#) may be utilized by the on-call PIO in drafting the information to be contained in the Amber Alert.

Once an Amber Alert has been activated, the PIO is responsible for updating the Amber Alert as additional information becomes available. the PIO is responsible for canceling the Amber Alert when appropriate.

The activation of an Amber Alert requires that designated agency personnel immediately execute pre-defined tasks in a coordinated and efficient manner. Therefore, it is essential that all personnel who potentially have a role in an activation are thoroughly trained in their assigned functions. Such training is conducted regularly to ensure the preparedness of any newly assigned personnel.

This policy is reviewed annually to determine the need for any updates to the information it contains.